

“Responsible Pet Ownership – The Calgary Model of Animal Control.”

Bill Bruce, Director Animal & Bylaw Services, The City of Calgary Presented at the September 2010 AKC Delegates Forum

Their mission:

“To encourage a safe, healthy, vibrant community of people and pets through the development, education, and compliance of bylaws that reflect community values.”

Responsible pet ownership is encouraged through licensing, public education and enforcement:

- Protect people from animals;
- Return pets to owner;
- Care for impounded animals;
- Subsidized spay/neuter programs;
- Obtain compliance to the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw.

It is important to identify the issues:

- **BSL** – is the issue particular breeds or is the issue aggressive canine behavior;
- **Pet Limits** – is the issue the number of animals or is the issue related to noise, smell or care being given to the animals.

Next, you must engage the stakeholders, by educating the public, gathering opinions, providing an opportunity to be heard and measuring support or opposition.

Public Education is important. It is the most powerful tool to change behavior: build knowledgeable citizens; give people good information to support making good choices; all this supports the perception of fairness.

The Four Principles of Responsible Pet Ownership are:

- 1) License and provide permanent identification for pets;
- 2) Spay or neuter pets;
- 3) Provide training, physical care, socialization and medical attention for pets;
- 4) Do not allow pets to become a threat or nuisance in the community.

Enforcement for lack of compliance is essential. It needs to provide a deterrent value while having a perception of fairness. The importance of bylaws serves two roles: set a minimum standard of acceptable behavior and to achieve compliance of that standard. Bylaws also help us live together as neighbors based on agreed upon rules, as well as provide a process for resolution.

An effective program removes barriers to responsible pet ownership:

- Licensing needs to be market sensitive and convenient;
- Providing a no cost spay/neuter program removes barriers for low income citizens;
- Public education programs teach citizens how to be responsible pet owners.

One very important component of the model is the Public Education School Program. The role of the program is to correct myths, remove misconceptions, transform misunderstanding, change behavior and key in citizen compliance.

The model program consists of six major curriculums:

- Dog Bite Prevention;
- Dogs in Our Society;
- Urban Coyotes;
- Freedom City;
- Junior Bylaw Project; and

- Think Responsibly.

These curriculums range from grades 1 to 7. Performance indicators for the program all show positive changes, with impounded animal number, aggressive animal incidents, euthanasia rate and number of bylaw infractions changed all on the decline; while return of owner rates, percent of animals licensed, and financial performance on the rise.

Finally, their facility was discussed; The Animal Services Centre is capable of holding up to 88 cats and 84 dogs, featuring a ventilation system, an aggressive isolation kennel, a waste management system, and a warm atmosphere for animals, staff and public. Their Animal Services Centre Clinic opened in July 2009 with its operational costs being funded from cat licensing revenue.

For more information on this amazing program, visit their website www.calgary.ca/animalservices .

Copies of this outstanding presentation may be obtained by contacting Bill Bruce, Director Animal & Bylaw Services, at bill.bruce@calvary.ca. This informative power point would make a great meeting program and is also perfect for municipalities looking to improve their animal services.

From the September 2010 Delegate Report for Taconic Hills KC, the section on Bill Bruce, who spoke at the Legislative Caucus prior to the main delegates meeting

“Bill Bruce from Calgary gave a preview of his presentation about his 20 year work in an independently funded shelter where they have been able to increase licensing rate, reduce by a LOT the bite rate, reduce the euthanasia rate. They have the support of the Alberta Kennel Club. His presentation can be emailed and I will request a copy, it was an hour long presentation to the Delegate body just prior to the meeting. The most powerful thing I took away from his talk is that

“virtually every animal in a shelter is there because a human relationship failed them”

He identified problems with BSL (it’s really about dog aggression, not breeds) and artificial limits on numbers of pets (is it really the number of pets or is it really about smell, noise, care?) Because there is so much licensing compliance, peace officers bring the animals HOME right away (their vans are equipped with laptops and wifi connections to find the owner and the address for a dog). They encourage compliance with 6month free licensing to new adoptees, amnesty programs, “Rewards” cards with which many sponsors participate... like even Ikea... tell potential corporate sponsors this is a way to get a large population to shop there... there was lots more, school outreach which can fit into curricula in many ways... older kids can learn about legislation, younger about science.”